

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD), a senior member of the House Appropriations Committee and the only member from Maryland, and Senator Paul S. Sarbanes (D-MD), today praised the Army Corps of Engineers for completing the dredging of St. Jerome Creek in St. Mary's County.

"This is a great day for recreational boaters, watermen, charter boat operators, and others who use Southern Maryland's waterways," Hoyer said. "The completed dredging will enable them to more easily exit and enter St. Jerome Creek during periods of low tide and benefit the many residents near it who depend on access to the Chesapeake Bay for income and recreation."

"I am pleased with the completion of this project which will help ensure that our watermen and recreational boaters will continue to have a safe, reliable and economically efficient navigation system for years to come," added Sarbanes.

"For the past fourteen years—since the last time it was dredged—the mouth of the creek has filled to the point where large boats cannot get in or out during low tide without scraping bottom," Hoyer said. "Clearly this has had a significant impact on those whose livelihoods depend on the water, not to mention recreational boaters, all of whom have seen the window of time to enter and exit the creek get smaller and trickier."

St. Jerome Creek provides the only safe harbor between Point Lookout and the Patuxent River for boats on the Chesapeake Bay seeking shelter from rapidly approaching storms. In 2004, at the request of Sarbanes, Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Hoyer, the Army Corps of Engineers agreed to expedite the dredging of St. Jerome Creek.

Last year, the House and Senate agreed to provide \$850,000 to dredge 4900 feet of the creek and \$200,000 to study the feasibility of constructing up to two jetties. The construction of jetties will free up critical pathways and reduce the dredging need from a two year cycle to a ten year cycle.

In May, the House passed the FY 2007 Energy and Water Appropriations Act which included an additional \$100,000 to study the feasibility of constructing jetties. The Senate must now pass the bill and the differences must be reconciled in a House-Senate Conference Committee before it can become law.

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